



# HMONG TIMES Online

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## Religious Leaders Support McCollum Legislation to Strengthen International Family P

*President Bush's 2007 Budget Hurts Women by Cutting \$79 Million from Voluntary Family Planning to the World's Countries*

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Washington, D.C. - Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-MN), Rep. Jim Ramste the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice celebrated International Women's Congress to support increased funding for international family planning. McCollum introduced H.R. 4188, the Focus on Family Health Worldwide Act, a bipartisan, life approach to meeting the critical family planning needs of the world's poorest

"The goal is simple - provide couples in the world's poorest countries the ability to plan their children and give mothers the opportunity to stay healthy, productive and alive," "Keeping poor women alive is not to be taken lightly. Over 530,000 women around the world die every year from pregnancy related causes."

The Focus on Family Health Worldwide Act (H.R. 4188) will extend access to voluntary family planning to families in the poorest countries. The bill authorizes \$600 million in FY2007 for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to support voluntary family planning, contraceptive procurement, logistical support, educational integration with HIV/AIDS activities in developing countries. Investments in international family planning are important

530,000 women died last year from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth with 99 percent of the deaths occurring in developing countries.

Nearly 11 million children under the age of five die each year, frequently from low birth-weight, malnutrition or complications in the mother's pregnancy.

For HIV-positive women, voluntary family planning is the most efficacious and cost-effective intervention to avoid transmission of HIV from mother-to-child.

In his Fiscal Year 2007 federal budget, President Bush cuts U.S. funding for international family planning by \$79 million, or \$357 million. If not reversed, these cuts will result in more unintended pregnancies, fewer couples spacing their children, and increased maternal deaths.

Religious leaders joining McCollum to support the Focus on Family Health Worldwide Act include: Reverend Elene Ivory, Director of the Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office; the Right Reverend Jane Holmes Dixon, the first African American woman bishop in the United States; Reverend Susan Andrews of Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church, Bethesda, MD; and Rabbi Scott Sperling, Director of the Atlantic Council of the Union for Reform Judaism.

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